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Recollections and Reflections of Thomas Fitch.

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AMONG THE PLAYERS

Every actor of ability can do or say one thing better than it has been said or done by any of his contemporaries. No tragedian, living or dead, ever equalled Frederick Warde in offering Richard the Third—his kingdom for any old horse. Demoniac glee was never better expressed than by the mocking laughter of Louis James in Francesca da Rimini, when, in a paroxysm of delight, he throws himself upon a couch exclaiming, "What a wife! What a brother!" Lawrence Barrett's delineation of the cynical cross-grained patriotic Cassius was never excelled. John McCullough was a manufactured rather than a natural actor and he played draw poker better than anything else yet Boucicault said of him that he was the only man of his day who knew how to wear a toga, and his delineation of Virgil was a work of art. There never was such a Don Caesar de Bazan as the older Wallack. Macready as Shylock; the elder Booth as Sir Giles Overreach; Edwin Booth as Hamlet; Salvini as Othello; Louis Morrison as Iago; Henry Irving as Matthias; Edwin Adams as Macbeth; Tom Keene as Fagan; Frank Mayo as Crockett; Madam Ponisi as Desdemona; Rachel as Phaedra; Ellen Terry as Adrienne; Mary Anderson as Juliet; Julia Dean Hayne as Pauline; Clara Morris, in Article 47; Modjeska as Camille; Rose Eytting as Nancy Sykes; Fanny Davenport as La Tosca; Frances Anne Kemble as Lady Macbeth; Mrs. Leslie Carter in the Heart of Maryland; Ada Rehan as Portia, and many many others, in some part or part of a part excelled and last but not least, greatest among the great was Forrest as Lear, with his melodious and magnetic oration.

I have seen and heard them all, for I began theater going at nine years of age. That seems a long long time ago, for time has swung his hour glass around my frosted head five and sixty times, yet let him not presume to point his scythe at me, and let nobody dare to call me an old man to my face, for no ancestor of mine ever considered it respectable to start on his journey up the golden stairway until he was over eighty years of age and the eternal Ego of me is as young as it was on that glorious night of the long ago, when the green baize curtain of the old Broadway theater ascended and disclosed a scene of enchantment.

The play was Othello, with Forrest as the Moor, and Conway as Iago, and Charles Pope as Cassio, and Grosvenor as Roderigo, and Davidge as Brabantio, and Madame Ponisi as Desdemona. Half a century and more has passed since then, and death and distance, and the tides of great events have rolled between; yet photographed in enduring colors upon my brain there lives the scenes and dialogues and the very intonations of the players on that "first night."

With many of the later generation of actors who resided in or visited California I was well acquainted, for I was a welcome, though not a frequent, visitor at the green room of the California theater. "Genial John" McCullough, Lawrence Barrett, who was the kindest of men and the cleverest of raconteurs; gentle and gifted Edwin Adams, who was seized by consumption and greeted death with a jest; Charles B. Bishop, melancholy in the green room and fun incarnate on the stage; Barton Hill, cleverest of dramatic critics; Charles R. Thorne, Jr., the chevalier of melodrama; Harry Edwards, the courtly; Walter Leman, who was "first old man" all his life; Frank Mayo, whose temperament was as artistic as his face; Julia Deane Hayne, "divinely tall and most divinely fair;" Jeanne Clara Walters, conscientious and careful; Mrs. Judah as kindly a nurse off the stage as she was to Juliet behind the footlights and rollicking Alice Harrison with a heart as large almost as her head, assembled daily after rehearsal in the green room.

Many were the discussions there concerning old and new readings of Shakespeare. Barrett and Adams once contended for an hour over one sentence in Macbeth. Adams declared that the traditional stage reading should be preserved. "If it is done when it were done, 'twere well it were done quickly. If but this blow could be the be all and the end all," etc.

Barrett insisted that it should be read: "If it is done when it were done 'twere well. 'Twere done quickly if but this blow could be the be all and the end all."

They were discussing one day a coming production of Julius Caesar and I ventured to outline a new line of business for Mark Anthony, when delivering his oration. Instead of proceeding with his speech in the usual order I suggested that there was in Rome in those days a condition of things not entirely dissimilar to those existing in California mining camps during election times. Caesar had been killed. Brutus with his high character and mighty eloquence had justified the homicide and pacified the people. Feeling perfectly safe and disdaining opposition Brutus consented that Mark Anthony might speak in defense of Caesar and did not consider Mark of sufficient consequence even to stop and hear him. Mark Anthony mounts the forum. He is recognized as a friend of Caesar and an opponent of the noble Brutus and with murmurs of dissent the populace commenced to move away. "Friends," says Anthony, and they

heeded him not. "Romans," he cries and they continue to depart; "Countrymen, lend me your ears," he pleads and the people still leave. Then he launches his final adjurations. He either has to lie or else lose his audience and he shouts: "I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him." Thus assured, those who were moving away paused and then as the text shows, Anthony gradually and adroitly turned the tide against the assassins.

My suggestion was adopted and the innovation was a success though its adoption was not helped by a satirical remark of Bishop that he knew of an audience at Utica, New York, which was in the same way switched over to female suffrage by a speech from Mark Anthony's sister—Susan B. Anthony.

The boys tried to induce me to play Mark Anthony for Edwin Adams' benefit. Adams was about to depart for Australia, and, under medical advice, was to go in a sailing vessel. McCullough urged me to take the part of the Roman and said to Bishop, "If he will do so it will bring to Ned Adams a larger audience. Don't you think so, Charley?" and Charley's answer was, "I think it will cause to be thrown upon the stage a supply of vegetables large enough to stock the ship for the voyage." "Why, he might play Mark Anthony better than Forrest could have done and don't you know that his political foes would delight at the chance to get even for some of his speeches, and every Democrat in the gallery would come with pockets bulging with potatoes and parsnips to throw at him."

I declined to encounter this possibility but some years afterwards, fired by an Arizona success as member of a local dramatic society, exaggerated reports of which had reached San Francisco, I was induced by Tom Maguire to play Richelieu at Baldwin's theater. The house was packed with the elite of San Francisco and I was called before the curtain at the close of every act. But it did not fool me. I attributed the large attendance to curiosity and the applause to generosity and I declined to repeat the performance.

James O'Neil said to me after the curtain fell, "Do you know that in your action at the close of the fourth act you violated all the stage traditions? When Richelieu says to Baradas, 'Behind thee stalks the headman,' he always crosses to right center and shakes his finger in the face of Baradas? But you never moved, you stood like a Stoughton bottle on a mantelpiece. Did you think that it was undignified for a Cardinal to walk down the stage, and that it would be more effective to do your cursing at long range?"

"Jimmy," said I, "I knew all about the stage business. The trouble was with my pantaloons. I removed my vest and coat in the dressing room and put on the Cardinal's robe, which covered me from neck to feet. I wore no suspenders, and when I delivered the curse of Rome the strap of my pantaloons burst and they fell about my ankles. I had to stand just where they fell. If I had attempted to go down front I had either to step out of my pantaloons or drag them trailing after me. Now it would not have looked well for a Lord Cardinal to leave his breeches in the middle of the stage as a souvenir and defy Baradas sans culotte, would it?"

Jimmy said that under the circumstances my stage business was quite right.

I notice that one of Lawrence Barrett's daughters is on the stage. I wonder if it is the one whose childish experiences as a dramatist and actress her father once related to a little company of us, who in the seventies, assembled at a dinner at Marchand's in San Francisco. The little one was allowed to celebrate her tenth birthday after her own fashion, and she organized her companions into a company to present a dramatic composition of her own. There were to be no grown people in the cast, or in the production, or at the rehearsals, or to be allowed to read or criticize the play in the writing of which Miss Barrett had a free hand. The rear parlor was turned into a stage with real scenery. The front parlor was seated and lighted and provided with an orchestra and on the night of the performance a hundred ladies and gentlemen assembled to witness the first and last only rendition of "The Husband's Return." The first act opened with a wedding festival in New England and the dialogue was delightful for the intonations and grammar of the Yankee were preserved. At the close of the act after an old fashioned country dance, the bridegroom, a precocious boy of ten, bade farewell to his bride. "I go," said he, "as was agreed between us at our betrothal, even from this hymeneal altar to the distant land of gold. There amid the pine clad mountains of California I will seek and win fortune for thee, my beautiful Clarissa Araminta." "Go darling Augustus Aurelius, my husband," replied the blushing bride. "It is hard to part with thee but go where duty calls thee. In thy absence I will uphold and beautify our home, and on thy return I will welcome thee—Go!" And the curtain fell amid prolonged applause.

There was a supposed interval of three years between the first and second acts. The curtain arose upon a scene on the Yuba River. Miners and Indians and Chinamen were mixed up together. There was a quarrel and

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Yours gratefully,
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Dear Sir—It is now two months since I procured your Belt and my regular use of the appliance for that length of time has made me feel like a new man, better in every way. My back does not bother me any now, and I will speak a good word for your Belt whenever I can. Yours respectfully,
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a duel with knives during which the husband befriended a miner who was stabbed but who lived long enough to bestow upon one hero his accumulation of golden nuggets.

The third and last act represented the Husband's return. The wife is discovered reading a letter from the absent one. At its conclusion she exclaims "He should be here ere now. He is coming, I hear his footsteps on the porch. My own Adolphus Aurelius is here." And thereupon enters Adolphus Aurelius clad in red miner's shirt with boots reaching above his knees. He drops upon the stage a huge sack and after a most dramatic embrace and meeting, the lady exclaims "What hast thou here?" He opens the sack and tumbles upon the stage three enormous nuggets or rather boulders of gold, which if they had not been made of gilded cork would have weighed about five hundred pounds. "For three long weary years I have been away from thee, toiling for wealth, I have never for an instant been idle and this is the result. Behold our fortune."

"This welcome indeed," replied the wife, "but not more welcome to me than my gifts will be to thee. During the long years thou hast been toiling for gold I have been laboring to up-build our home. I, too, have never for an instant been idle. Thou shalt see the result. Behold our family."

And from the rear entrance enter Lucy arrayed in a nurses cap, carrying an infant in her arms and with two little lads clinging to her gown. Tableau—the returned husband—left center—raises his arms in frantic joy, the wife—right center—stands with one arm akimbo and with the other "points with pride" at her family, the orchestra plays "Johnny comes marching home" and the audience is in convulsions of laughter.

Among the leading actors in Califor-

nia at an early day was J. H. Warwick. He left the stage for politics, and in 1863 was a member of the California legislature. He played Claude Melnotte and kindred characters exceedingly well. He understood the art of claquering and on the closing night of his engagement always arranged to be called before the curtain where he delivered a short speech, eulogized the town and its people, and declared that he intended at the close of his professional career to become a resident and leave his bones there.

He played a short engagement at Marysville at a most unfortunate time. It poured every night, and the audience was not there, and those who did come were dull, damp and dispirited, and there was a hole in the Warwick exchequer into which a brick block might have tumbled. But in response to the few poor voices which cried "Warwick" when the curtain fell the actor appeared in front, bowed and was about to retire when an unthinking man on one of the front benches cried "Oh, Warwick, you forgot about your bones."

Warwick turned and faced his tormentor. "Thank you, my friend," said he. "You are right. I did forget to mention that when I am about to die I shall come to this town to leave my bones. I shall do this because I feel that I could pass from the world here with less regret than in any other place on earth."

How he is known: Wife—"Before marriage a man is known by the company he keeps." Husband—"And after?" Wife—"By the clothes his wife wears."—Town Topics.

Goodman—"Do you ever think of the good old saying that it's more blessed to give than to receive?" Pugliese—"Yes, when I've got the boxing-gloves on I do."—Vogue.

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